

President's Report to the Annual General Meeting of Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment held 27th August, 2012 at Narrabeen Tramshed

From Tony Carr:

I'd like to start by congratulating Murray Stewart, a member of the Manly Warringah Kayak Club located right next to the Tramshed, for bringing home Gold for Australia in the London Olympics. The Club had two other members competing in London – Jo Brigden-Jones and Naomi Flood. There are over 20 kayak racing clubs in Sydney alone and it's remarkable that one club should provide three members of the Australian kayaking team.

It's with pleasure I present my 6th annual report as President of *Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment*. We were formed as a result of a community summit on the status of the lagoon and catchment held in 2005.

Friends mission is to see the remaining bushland in the catchment permanently protected and remediation occur where necessary. As land values continue to rise, there are constant pressures to replace bushland with urban development. If this occurs, it will have a catastrophic impact on the catchment and the lagoon itself, with ecosystems collapsing and the lagoon becoming even shallower than it is now.

We have a large group of passionate and committed members and supporters, numbering 900 in total and we thank each and every one of you for your encouragement and enthusiasm for our cause.

It's been a busy and to some degree frustrating year for us.

Our expectation this time last year was that Narrabeen State Park would be a reality before our 2012 AGM. It's an outcome everyone wants – we have been strongly backed by our three local MPs and two councils. At our *Meet the Candidates* forum just before the State elections last year, every local candidate enthusiastically supported the concept. Our lobbying efforts have included Macquarie Street, local councillors and the Department of Lands. But still we have no park. Had State government acted promptly on our proposal, as we urged them to do last year, the champagne would be flowing tonight. But recent Aboriginal land claims on the lagoon and surrounding areas have brought planning to a halt. We are in limbo with no prospect for resolution in the immediate future.

At least the pending claims help prevent any unwarranted development that would impact on flora and fauna.

The other issue that has occupied much of our time is the dredging of the lagoon. *Friends* supports the proposal, providing there is no negative impact on the environment. We support Warringah Council's three part plan but believe the process unnecessarily covers ground that has been gone over many times in the past decade. The result is an unnecessarily costly exercise for ratepayers.

On the good news front we are delighted with the progress being made on the Multi Use Trail. This will attract even larger numbers of people from other parts of Sydney and it's important that infrastructure planning take place now to ensure these good folks can be accommodated without stress to our fragile environment.

I hope you'll agree that *Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment* can be compared to the beautiful Black Swans that have recently reappeared on the lagoon - elegant to look at on the surface – but with a hell of a lot going on beneath the water!

Here are 12 other issues we have prepared submissions on over the last year:

- Review of Environmental Factors relating to the proposed Mountain Bike Tracks
- Development Proposal for Oxford Falls Valley (Category 3 use)
- Development Proposal for Oxford Falls Valley Retirement Village – the Land and Environment Court Case
- Protecting the habitat of endangered fauna under threat (Endangered pygmy possum)
- Protection of bushland on unused road reserves
- Warringah Biodiversity Conservation Study
- Strategic review of non-urban land in the Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment (Deferred areas under WLEP2011 include the Oxford Falls Valley and Belrose North Localities)
- Review of Biobanking Scheme
- NSW Planning Review
- Draft Warringah Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- Proposed Wildlife Corridor adjoining Frenchs Forest Hospital site

And there were more. Committee member Ann Sharp has been responsible for assembling many of these submissions and we thank her for this fine work.

Our quarterly public forums like this one addressed a wide range of subjects from Aboriginal history to the environmental challenges we face. We also produced newsletters every two or three months and our website – www.narrabeenlagoon.org.au has been upgraded and relaunched.

Our free community bushwalks, tag along tours and kayak trips, all run by committee members and very generously by Councillor Conny Harris, are in enormous demand and have significantly improved community awareness of the issues. We recently added cycle rides around the lagoon to our offering. Over 1,300 people have taken part in these since we launched the series in 2007. They are great fun. Please join us on one of these trips. We placed a copy of the current program on your chair earlier this evening.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our Executive.

The committee has served you well – please stand Judith Bennett, Mary Armstrong, Jacqui Marlow, Diane Malnic, Phyll Morris, Ann Sharp and Angus Gordon. We thank you all. Angus Gordon will be stepping down from the committee if he is elected to Pittwater Council and will be sadly missed if that happens.

I particularly want to acknowledge the dedication and inspiration of our Founder, Judith Bennett.

We have some excellent new people standing for the committee. If you would like to help us with a one off assignment please make contact. For instance you might like to run a membership recruitment drive for us, prepare a submission or to see whether there are some environmental grants out there that we should be applying for.

Our financial position remains strong, as you'll hear from Diane. Our objective is to have \$25,000 or thereabouts invested so we can hire external consultants and lawyers in future, should these be required to help us defend the catchment.

We head into our 8th year in a very robust position, with clear objectives and strategies and an even stronger determination to achieve total environmental protection for Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment.

Tony Carr – President